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Take a Loved One to the Doctor on September 16

When was the last time your loved ones visited a doctor? They could be long overdue for a check up. The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is encouraging everyone, especially those belonging to racial/ethnic minority groups, to schedule an appointment and take their loved ones to a health care professional. The Health Department is joining the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in recognizing Tuesday, September 16, as "Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day."

"Regular health care, including preventive care, can enhance and extend the lives of those you love," said the Health Department's Executive Director Dale Galassie. "When people are connected with the right medical care, they can be educated about important health issues. Certain health problems can be prevented and others can be treated."

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The Health Department is particularly focusing this message at African Americans and Hispanics since these groups are disproportionately affected by specific illnesses, such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Factors that lead to such health disparities include poverty, lack of education, lack of access to health care services and behaviors that place individuals at risk. Research has demonstrated that despite the gains made in life expectancy in the United States over the past century, gaps in health outcomes persist among ethnic groups, such as:

- In 1999, African Americans were 30 percent more likely to die of cancer than Whites when differences in age distributions were taken into account.
- In 2000, 47 percent of all AIDS cases reported in the U.S. were among African Americans, and the rate of new cases among African Americans was almost 10 times higher than among non-Hispanic whites.
- Hispanics have higher rates of cervical, esophageal and stomach cancers vs. non-Hispanic Whites.

“I can’t overstate how important it is for individuals to get regular check-ups,” said Galassie. “Research indicates that minorities have a tendency to see a doctor less often. We can decrease the health gap if people take the step to make an appointment to see a doctor. It’s your health and only you can manage it.”

The Health Department offers a wide variety of primary care services, including family medicine, women’s health, pediatric care and laboratory services. The Health

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Department maintains four community health center facilities in Waukegan, Zion, North Chicago and Round Lake Park. No residents are turned away due to an inability to pay. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call (847) 377-8400.

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